

Council Highlights: May 2002

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COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS is intended to provide quick updates on issues of interest to members and affiliates of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU). It is produced regularly throughout the academic year.

This issue covers the months of March and April 2002.

Volume of secondary school applications remains strong

As noted in the February issue of *Council Highlights*, the increase in applications received from Ontario secondary school students was 15.8% at that time, year-over-year. As of mid-April, volume increased even further, to 16.3%. Mid-April statistical reports released by the Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC) showed that 70,394 individual students had submitted 290,781 university and program selections for 2002 full-time fall admission. The increase in multiple choices of program selections stood at 21.2% as compared to the same date in last year's cycle. When considering the difference in applications to four or more institutions or programs, the increase is 35.8%. The latest figure indicates that a far greater number of applicants are improving their chances of admission by applying to more institutions. OUAC Executive Director Greg Marcotte reports that the number of inquiries received from anxious applicants and parents has increased markedly this year.

The Centre, meanwhile, is in the final stages of planning to process the 105,000 double cohort applications expected to be submitted by individual Ontario secondary school students next year. Initial indications are that over 60% of these students will apply on line using OUAC's popular web application system.

Success stories on university research compiled

The Ontario Council on University Research, in association with COU, has published *A Sampling of Success Stories of Provincial Investment in University Research* – a compilation of success stories illustrating the range and richness of university research supported by the Ontario government. Through the Ontario Research and Development Challenge Fund, the Ontario Innovation Trust and the Premier's Research Excellence Awards, Ontario universities have been able to conduct leading-edge research that is contributing not only to the competitiveness of Ontario's economy but also the quality of life of Ontario citizens. The book, which is available on COU's web site (www.cou.on.ca), provides brief accounts of research and innovation for each university across the disciplines.

2002 University Applicant Survey underway

COU has partnered with Acumen Research Group to administer the 2002 University Applicant Survey (UAS) to a random sample of 20,000 first-year, direct-entry students to Ontario universities. The UAS is designed to provide a profile of applicants and determine key factors that influence their choice of university. Some institutions have been using survey results since 1997, when the survey was first administered, to aid in the recruitment process and to ensure that applicants are provided with relevant information in a useful format. A steering committee made up of members from Ontario institutions has been established to oversee the content and administration of the survey. Results are expected in summer 2002.

Collaborative gender and health curriculum to be developed

Two committees under the auspices of the Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine (COFM), Undergraduate Education and Gender Issues, have acquired funding for a new project to develop a collaborative, web-enabled, medical curriculum that integrates gender and health. This process will examine the undergraduate curriculum at Ontario's five medical schools to determine how

medical students can best learn about the health of women and the effect of gender, in the context of present and future requirements. All Ontario medical schools will be able to use this integrated curriculum. The Women's Health Council is funding the first phase of the project.

Forum on seniors' health care scheduled for May

On May 23, 2002, the Ontario Interdisciplinary Council for Aging and Health (OICAH) will hold a forum entitled *Harmonizing Our Activities*. The forum will bring together key individuals involved in service, education, research and policy to examine ways in which the various activities, strategies and government initiatives can be maximized to improve the quality of care for Ontario's seniors. Representatives from Ontario universities will meet with service providers and officials from several ministries including Health and Long-Term Care; Citizenship, Culture and Recreation; and Training, Colleges and Universities.

Applications to rehabilitation science programs increase by 26.9%

Another application processing division of OUAC has had a significant increase in applications for full-time admission for September 2002. As of mid-March, the province's five universities offering programs in rehabilitation sciences have 26.9% more applicants to consider for this year's program as compared to last year. The number of individual program and university choices has increased by 51.2%. This is welcome news since application volumes for these programs – audiology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech-language pathology – have been lighter than expected for the past several years. The increase in volume is attributed to greater advertising of these programs by the universities and the Centre. Programs are offered at both the undergraduate and graduate levels depending on the institution.

Updates on the surge in enrolment and provincial funding support published

COU recently published two important funding updates. *Funding for Ontario Universities: The Detailed Picture* reviews the funding shortage due to enrolments already outpacing the original, joint projections of universities and government. *Funding for Ontario Universities: A Status Report* provides details on the current inadequate funding levels from government, including transfer payments, original and revised enrolment changes and funding implications, and a comparison of capital funding for school boards and universities. COU is seeking a meeting with the new Premier to discuss the issues raised in these updates and the funding implications.

Federal research funding organizations represented at OCUR meeting

On April 11, 2002, the Ontario Council on University Research (OCUR) held its annual meeting in Ottawa to consult with heads of the major federal research funding organizations. Discussions focused on the changing environment for federal support of university research, the situation and priorities of each funding council, and the past and prospective future performance of Ontario universities in their funding competitions. Guests were Dr. Marc Renaud, President of Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC); Dr. Tom Brzustowski, President of Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC); and Dr. David Strangway, President of Canada Foundation on Innovation (CFI) and Carmen Charette, Vice-President of CFI.

COU submission on Ontario's proposed privacy legislation

COU's submission on Ontario's proposed *Privacy of Personal Information Act, 2002* was forwarded to the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services on March 28, 2002. It noted that while Ontario universities were fully supportive of and committed to the protection of personal privacy – and indeed have in place well-established access and privacy policies based on COU Information and Privacy Guidelines – they constitute a unique sector regarding the collection, use and disclosure of personal information. While respecting the bill's intent to protect personal information, COU made a number of recommendations that addresses the specific needs of the university sector. These needs revolve around, for example, the organizational need for confidentiality in student evaluation and peer review as well as the need to sustain leading-edge

research, preserve invaluable archival material and develop advancement activities.

Proposal for province-wide digital library submitted

COU is leading collaboration arrangements with colleges, schools and libraries to develop an Ontario Digital Library (ODL), which would be a province-wide digital library serving school boards, colleges, universities and public libraries. In March 2002, the Ontario Library Association submitted a proposal to develop a business plan for ODL to the provincial government. Collaborative purchasing and interinstitutional operations through the ODL will provide major purchasing and operational leverage for universities.

OPAS launches awards for teaching with technology

The Office for Partnerships for Advanced Skills (OPAS) has established two awards that recognize innovation and excellence in teaching with technology. The first award will recognize a program, course or module designed for university students, at either the undergraduate or graduate level. The second award will acknowledge a learning product designed specifically for people in the workforce.

OPAS, which continues to actively promote learning technology, has organized three Summer Institutes on Learning Technology to assist faculty looking to expand and improve their skills in this area. "We are also beginning a program of online support, which will be available to all faculty by the summer," says Dr. Norm Shulman, Executive Director of OPAS. "These awards are a next step in promoting the use of learning technology."

For application and information on the awards, visit the OPAS web site (www.opas-partnerships.com). Submissions must be received by June 17, 2002. The awards, which are valued at \$7,500 each, will be presented at a special awards luncheon in Toronto on October 18, 2002.

OPAS is a partnership of Ontario universities and major Canadian companies that are committed to advancing university-industry partnerships.

OUAC wins EDI contract serving Ontario's colleges

OUAC has won a contract to develop and maintain the electronic transcript system, using the EDI data communications standard, for Ontario's colleges. For several years, the Centre has routed academic transcripts electronically to and from Ontario universities. Now Ontario colleges will also become "trading partners" – with electronic transcripts being routed through OUAC's computers to and from Ontario colleges as well as between universities. Five colleges are expected to participate later this year with the remaining colleges joining in soon afterward.

This highly efficient, cost-effective and secure data-transfer process will expedite the circulation of academic data throughout the Ontario postsecondary sector and, at the same time, reduce fraud often associated with hard-copy documentation. Applicants to universities or colleges will include their prior institution reference numbers on their application forms and authorize the Centre to collect and distribute transcripts for them electronically. The EDI standard will ensure that both "sender" and "receiver" transcript data will be legible by the various computer systems and platforms operating throughout these institutions. Expansion to institutions outside Ontario is expected to follow.

Law schools go on line at OUAC

Early this year, the Centre secured the approval of Ontario's law schools to proceed with a fully integrated, web-based application system for the 2003 admission application cycle. Law school admissions officials – aware of the 96% web-usage rate of applicants for medical schools this year – are now working with OUAC programming staff to put the final touches on their online system, which will be available this July. With this latest addition to OUAC's web application

system, over 98% of university applicants served by the Centre will be able to apply on line next year.

Financial reports on Ontario universities released

COU recently released three reports, produced under the auspices of the Council of Financial Officers – Universities of Ontario (CFOU–UO), that provide the yearly update of financial and statistical information on Ontario's universities:

- Financial Report of Ontario Universities 2000-01, Volume I – Universities
- Financial Report of Ontario Universities 2000-01, Volume II – Affiliated and Federated Colleges and Universities
- Compendium of Statistical and Financial Information – Ontario Universities 2000-01

On April 8, 2002, COU held its third annual information session for representatives of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, including Jamie Mackay, Director of the Universities Branch, and his staff. Jane Manson (University of Waterloo), Chair of the CFOU–UO Financial Reporting Committee, as well as committee members Pierre Piché (University of Toronto) and Carter Scott (University of Western Ontario), led the discussion and provided Ministry staff with an update on significant revisions and interpretation of the financial reports.



